



## Transition to Renewable Energy under threat

June 2021

That the Synod resolves:

(a) To acknowledge that God calls us to live in harmony with our natural environment and to seek justice and well-being for all creation.

(d) To acknowledge the need for immediate and substantial action by governments, businesses and communities, including the councils and institutions of the church in this Synod, to mitigate climate change caused by human activity and the threat it poses to God's good creation.

(i) To call on the Commonwealth Government to commit to:

a. Showing leadership in taking actions to limit global average temperature rise to 1.5°C above preindustrial levels;

b. Net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 at the latest;

d. not providing financial support to new natural gas developments;

e. assisting businesses to reduce or eliminate any dependence on natural gas, and Australia's natural gas requirements being met by reserving a portion of existing production, as is already the case in Western Australia;

h. continued support for the uptake of renewable energy sources

Selected parts of the resolution on Climate Justice adopted at the February 2021 meeting of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.

The Commonwealth Government has taken steps to divert funding earmarked to support the development and uptake of renewable energy to multinational fossil fuel corporations. They have introduced the *Australian Renewable Energy Agency Amendment (2020 – 2021 Budget Programs) Regulations 2021*, requiring the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) to fund some projects run by fossil fuel corporations.

The regulations will require ARENA to fund:

- Carbon capture and storage projects;
- Carbon capture and utilisation projects;
- The production of hydrogen gas from coal and gas; and
- The Industrial Energy Transformation Studies Program financial assistance.

Each of these areas is likely to result in ARENA providing government revenue to multinational fossil fuel corporations.



Carbon capture and storage means trying to catch greenhouse gas emissions and store them, such as sealing them in underground caves.

ARENA was established by the Australian Government on 1 July 2012. Their current purpose is to improve the competitiveness of renewable energy technologies and increase the supply of renewable energy through innovation that benefits Australians and businesses.

So far, ARENA has invested \$1.67 billion into 586 projects that have resulted in \$6.84 billion in value for renewable energy. The projects have included developing more efficient solar cells, launching large scale solar farms and helping to ensure that solar power is the cheapest form of generating electricity in Australia.



It makes no sense to divert funding from renewable energy development to carbon capture and storage projects for fossil fuel operations. Renewable energy technologies are reliable and provide certainty of greenhouse gas emission reduction. Carbon capture and storage is an unproven technology. That means there is no guarantee it will effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions to the extent needed. Australian Governments have poured \$1.3 billion into carbon capture and storage projects so far. They have only one problematic project to show for that funding. The Gorgon gas project in Western Australia attempted to implement carbon capture and storage with its operations. The project was three years behind schedule in becoming operational. It will only capture 40% of the greenhouse gas emissions from the Gorgon project. That will leave substantial emissions to be released into the atmosphere to contribute to climate change. The failure of the carbon capture and storage project at Gorgon was responsible for half of Australia's increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

The introduction of the regulations came as the International Energy Agency stated that all new investments in coal, oil and gas projects should end if the global average temperature increase were to be limited to 1.5°C.

Outside of the regulations that would change the function of ARENA, the Commonwealth Government has been providing other hand-outs to fossil fuel corporations:

- As part of the budget, it announced up to \$2,353 million to be given to the two multinational oil corporations running the two oil refineries in Queensland and Victoria between now and 2030; and
- There is over \$500 million in hand-outs for the benefit of gas corporations, including:
  - \$78.3 million to assist the opening up of five new gas production basins, including the Beetaloo Basin in the Northern Territory and the North Bowen and Galilee Basins in Queensland;
  - \$173 million for the Northern Territory Gas Industry Roads Upgrade to enable access to exploration areas;
  - \$263.7 million for carbon capture and storage projects;
  - \$32 million grant to the Golden Beach gas production and storage project in Victoria.

The Australian Energy Market Operator has issued a plan for the future of electricity generation in Australia, known as the Integrated System Plan. The Plan shows that gas-fired power generation is not needed in Australia. Gas developments cannot compete on price with power generated by renewable energy sources backed up by battery storage.

### What You Can Do

While the Government has introduced the regulations to change the mandate for what projects ARENA funds, the Parliament can still cancel them using a disallowance motion. The Greens and Labor oppose the new regulations, so the votes of the independent Senators are vital to disallowing the regulations.

Write polite and respectful letters to:

**Senator Jacqui Lambie**

PO Box 256  
Burnie, TAS, 7320

**Senator Stirling Griff**

Level 1, 110 King William Road  
Goodwood, SA, 5034

Salutation: Dear Senator Lambie

Salutation: Dear Senator Griff

Points to make in your letters:

- Express deep concern that the Commonwealth Government is moving to divert funds under the Australian Renewable Energy Agency to give to multinational fossil fuel corporations.
- Request that they support any move to disallow the *Australian Renewable Energy Agency Amendment (2020 – 2021 Budget Programs) Regulations 2021*.